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This news statement contains the findings of an Amnesty International fact-finding visit to Kuwait and an update to Amnesty International's December 1990 report, Iraq/Occupied Kuwait: Human rights violations since 2 August.

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**KUWAIT: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON EMIR  
TO INTERVENE OVER CONTINUING TORTURE AND KILLINGS**

Amnesty International today publicly appealed to the Emir of Kuwait to intervene personally to end the wave of arbitrary arrests, torture and killings in the country since the withdrawal of Iraqi forces.

Reporting back after a two-week visit to Kuwait, an Amnesty International fact-finding team said scores of victims had been killed and hundreds more had been arbitrarily arrested, many brutally tortured by Kuwaiti armed forces and members of "resistance" groups since 26 February.

"These violations are continuing and appear to be largely unchecked," Amnesty International said.

"Their scale and persistence threaten to leave an indelible stain on Kuwait's human rights record. This is all the more lamentable in light of hopes that the kind of violations that occurred under the Iraqi occupation would be a thing of the past."

The Amnesty International team, the first from the organization to visit Kuwait since the invasion by Iraq, was sent to investigate allegations of human rights violations after Iraqi forces withdrew from the Emirate. The team also updated information contained in Amnesty International's December 1990 report on violations by Iraqi forces in Kuwait.

Amnesty International said today that although it was still not possible to come to definite conclusions about the precise number of people killed by Iraqi forces during the occupation, now that it had visited Kuwait it was able to confirm that its report had given an accurate overall picture of the range and intensity of the violations inflicted on the population during the occupation.

However, on the highly publicized issue in the December report of the baby deaths, Amnesty International said that although its team was shown alleged mass graves of babies, it was not established how they had died and the team found no reliable evidence that Iraqi forces had caused the deaths of babies by removing them or ordering their removal from incubators.

In a preliminary report on the team's findings on the current situation in Kuwait, Amnesty International said the vast majority of the victims of abuse since 26 February were Palestinians, among them Jordanian passport holders. They also included Iraqi and Sudanese nationals and members of the "Bidun" community (stateless persons living in Kuwait who have no right of permanent residence and are denied basic civil and political rights).

"Victims have been gunned down in public or taken away, tortured and killed in secret. Hundreds of victims were plucked from their homes, taken from streets or arrested at check-points, many to be tortured in police stations, schools and other make-shift detention centres," Amnesty International said.

Many have apparently "disappeared" and some are believed to be held in secret detention.

Amnesty International is also concerned about the plight of some 600 detainees acknowledged by the authorities. They had been held in the Military Prison outside Kuwait City, some for over a month, reportedly in deplorable conditions. Torture is said to have been rife, including beatings, electric shocks and prolonged deprivation of food and water, and medical care virtually non-existent. Detainees told Amnesty International that at least seven inmates had died in custody after torture and the organization has the names of two of them.

The Amnesty International team managed to visit these prisoners after they had been transferred to the Juveniles' Prison in Kuwait City, where their conditions of detention appear to have improved.

"The people we saw had clearly been through an extremely harrowing time and the few detainees we were able to examine medically still bore the scars of torture. Others were ill and appeared to be suffering from infectious diseases, including tuberculosis and dysentery," according to the fact-finding team, which included a British forensic pathologist.

While the team was visiting the prison, food was brought to the prisoners from a hotel but inmates stated that they had previously suffered malnutrition and their state of health appeared to confirm this.

The authorities have said that they would be tried under the 1967 Martial Law Regulations on a range of alleged offences related to the occupation, including collaboration with the Iraqi forces. A number of offences carry the death penalty, which Amnesty International opposes in all circumstances.

Amnesty International said that in the immediate aftermath of the Iraqi withdrawal most of the abuses were said to have been carried out by "resistance" squads, but that armed forces personnel were increasingly cited in later cases. Victims were still being killed and tortured during the Amnesty International team's visit from 28 March to 9 April.

The team has individual details on 10 extrajudicial executions but says the total number of such killings has been at least scores.

Amnesty International said it had been impossible to arrive at precise figures of those arrested, tortured and killed.

The authorities had not granted full access to detainees by independent bodies, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, and relatives were not being informed of detainees' whereabouts.

As a result, the fate of many victims was still unknown. Some were reported to have died in custody and others were believed held in various places used as unacknowledged detention centres.

Torture victims taken to hospital were rarely recorded as bearing marks of torture, although the Amnesty International team saw one death certificate of a young Jordanian man which gave torture as the cause of death.

A number of hospitalized torture victims are reported to have suffered kidney failure from "crush syndrome" which resulted from severe beatings.

"Some doctors told us Kuwaiti army and security personnel supervised treatment and even turned down doctors' recommendations for further treatment," Amnesty International said.

"It was also alleged that some doctors cooperated willingly with these personnel and themselves treated victims harshly. This was said to have happened particularly at al-'Addan Hospital, just outside Kuwait City. We were repeatedly told that torture victims sent for initial treatment to other hospitals pleaded not to be sent on to al-'Addan Hospital."

Amnesty International said that while a range of doctors agreed that a number of people treated in hospital had shown signs of torture, a few others denied that torture was a problem. One senior Kuwaiti doctor at Mubarak Hospital acknowledged merely that "a few Palestinians were punched and kicked about" in the period after 26 February.

Amnesty International said its team had detailed testimonies of over 40 people, aged from 16 years to 60, who said they had been tortured by armed civilian militias or the armed forces.

"In a number of cases the torture marks were still clearly visible. In other cases, the accounts given were credible and consistent with the treatment alleged," Amnesty International said.

One Palestinian victim, aged 24, was brought into the team's hotel the day after his arrest. He said uniformed personnel identifying themselves as members of Kuwait's Military Intelligence had beaten him for hours, stamped on his body, thrown acid over him and subjected him to electric shock torture. Severe injuries covered most of his back and shoulders. Parts of his thighs were raw, with skin peeling off "consistent with the application of sulphuric acid, though some could also have been caused by electric current," according to Amnesty International. "He was in a pitiable state."

Another victim, a Sudanese aged 35, still bore the scars of savage assaults inflicted in early March. "There was little uninjured skin area remaining on the chest and upper arms," Amnesty International's forensic pathologist reports. "The appearances are of unusually heavy, multiple beating of a severity not seen in my previous experience."

Another Sudanese tortured with this victim remains unaccounted for.

A 60-year-old Palestinian told the team he and three younger men had been arrested by soldiers at a check-point on 9 March and tortured in a succession of police stations.

"At times we were held in groups of about 30. Most were young men of 18 and over. But there was a man of 70 and one of 80. They were beaten too."

He said he had been beaten daily for 14 days before being freed. "But what they did to me did not compare to the barbaric treatment of my young companions who are still missing."

Amnesty International says savage beatings with sticks, hose-pipes and rifle butts and whippings with electric cables appeared to be the norm for many detainees, but its team catalogued over a dozen forms of torture used. They included the use of electric shocks, burning with cigarettes, candles and acid, cutting with knives, biting and threats of execution and sexual assault. Teams of torturers often appeared to work in relays, maintaining the torture for hours. Daily torture of captives appeared to have been common.

"Although revenge for alleged collaboration appears to have been the motive in some cases, many people seem to have been targeted simply because of their nationality."

Amnesty International said that the judicial authorities had assured the organization that they were trying to get the judicial system functioning again. They acknowledged that violations had been committed by non-official groups immediately after the Iraqi withdrawal, but gave assurances that those responsible would be brought to justice.

In some cases the authorities did appear to be investigating the cases of detainees and officials said they would try to sort who was to be charged and who released.

"During our visit some officials from the Public Prosecutor's office had begun to process the 600 detainees moved to the Juveniles' Prison and trials are expected to open at the end of this month."

Amnesty International requested permission for its observers to attend the trials and an agreement in principle was obtained from the Public Prosecutor.

Summing up, the organization said that in spite of some positive steps, overall safeguards against human rights violations appear to have been accorded "an extremely low priority" by the country's rulers.

"This bodes ill for the future and is the cause of fear and resentment among the communities which have been targeted."

To update its December 1990 report, Iraq/Occupied Kuwait: Human rights violations since 2 August, the Amnesty International team also interviewed and medically examined further victims of violations during the Iraqi occupation, visited hospitals and checked cemetery records.

The December report detailed the torture and extrajudicial execution of hundreds of victims and the imprisonment of several thousand prisoners. The report catalogued over 30 kinds of torture inflicted by Iraqi forces.

When the report was written it was impossible for independent investigators to enter Kuwait and Amnesty International teams interviewed Kuwaitis and others who had fled Kuwait in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere.

Amnesty International's December report had cited medical and other sources as alleging that large numbers of babies had died after removal from incubators by or on orders of Iraqis. Amnesty International said it rechecked its information in early 1991 after doubt was cast on the credibility of its reports of incubator deaths. Although the number of baby deaths cited in the report was in question, testimony from several sources appeared at that time to confirm that babies had indeed died on a large scale.

"However, once we were actually in Kuwait and had visited hospitals and cemeteries and spoken to doctors at work, we found that the story did not stand up," Amnesty International said.

The organization says it remains unclear how many babies died in Kuwait during the occupation or how they died. Officials at Al-Rigga cemetery, the main cemetery used for those killed by the Iraqis, maintain that mass graves contain the bodies of about 120 babies buried during August and September. They insist the deaths resulted from removal from incubators, but cite as evidence only vague reports, allegedly from bereaved families.

"Although some medical sources in Kuwait, including a Red Crescent doctor, were still claiming that babies had died in this way, we found no hard evidence to support this. Credible medical opinion in hospitals discounts the allegations," Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International said it had included the allegations in its December report after receiving reports from a range of medical and other sources in different places.

"At the time we issued the report that was our evidence. Although shocking, the allegations were consistent with the known violations committed by Iraqi forces over the previous decade in Iraq. These violations included both selective killing and torture of children and mass indiscriminate killing, as during the chemical bombing of Halabja which resulted in the deaths of thousands in 1988. Examples of similar atrocities are continuing to be reported from Iraq at present.

"We take great care to check and update the information we publish and we are always ready to issue corrections if previously published data is later shown not to stand up. In line with this policy, an update with corrections is being issued for our December 1990 report."

**EMBARGOED FOR 0001 HRS GMT FRIDAY 18 APRIL 1991**